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RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE 1269
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STATE FOR NEA/ARN, NEA/PA, NEA/AIA, INR/NESA, R/MR, I/GNEA, B/BXN,
B/BRN, NEA/PPD, NEA/IPA FOR ALTERMAN
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON ZARQAWI'S DEATH AND WAR ON TERROR

Editorial Commentary on Zarqawi's Death

-- "Struggle between the government and the Islamists to win the people"

Columnist Fahd Kheetan writes on the inside page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (06/18): "The noticeable development in the case of the four Islamic deputies is not the fact that they were arrested, but that the incident is being employed to formulate an anti-Islamic movement trend among the people and attract the huge numbers of unbiased people to the government's side.... More than once, PM Ma'rouf Bakhit said that he will compete with the Islamists over the people.... The case of the four deputies was an opportunity to test the ability of the government and state institutions to challenge the power of the Islamists among the people on the streets.... The discrepancy was in last Thursday's demonstration where the government resorted to protesting in the streets, a tradition usually adopted by the opposition, as governments have the authority and can make any decision they want. So who would the government pressure when it goes on a demonstration? The purpose of the demonstration this time was different, and the struggle with the Islamists is for the street and not the rule. Yet, a legitimate question remains: would the Mayor of Amman allow the Islamists to organize a demonstration similar to that of last Thursday? True, the Islamists lost as a result of their four deputies did, but the government gained no benefits. After all, where are those forces that reap in the streets and add to the government's basket? They do not exist, and will not exist as long as the governments in our countries are formed in salons and do not reflect the will of the parliamentary and people's majority."

-- "The government and the Brotherhood in initial confrontation"

Chief Editor Taher Odwan writes on the back page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (06/18): "In short, the state is waging an initial confrontation [against the Islamists] by invoking the law, the public and the media. Even if the thousands of people who took part in Thursday's demonstration were encouraged to do so by the government, it is in the best interest of the Muslim Brotherhood, their image and their status to deal with the issue by recognizing the presence of popular pressures and respecting the social and humanitarian considerations related to the families of the martyrs of the bombings and the feelings of all Jordanians. Continuing to ignore this is going to complicate the crisis and leave it open to surprises, when, in a best case scenario, means the continued deterioration of relations between the two parties."

Editorial Commentary on War on Terror

-- "The 'shapeless' definition of terrorism requires disciplined legislation"

Columnist Bateer Wardam writes on the inside page center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (06/18): "I do not know if the anti-terrorism law includes the need for detailed regulations and instructions, but it is clear that the law needs a definition that is disciplined and leaves no room for absolute authorities to make general claims. There is, after all, the minimum level of human rights and constitutional rights that must be upheld and preserved.... There is no moral shame in drawing the red lines for freedom of expression. This line, incidentally, does guarantee an extensive space for freedom. Any anti-terrorism law or penalties law must provide citizens, parliamentarians or regular people, with every right to criticize the government and its policies, and even the ability to sympathize with terrorist groups, so long it does not constitute a call for violence.... Terrorism, the shapeless phenomenon that is getting increasingly complicated and dangerous, is reaching out its heinous hand to Jordan, and we are concerned that there are those on the inside who are willing to receive it. That is why Jordan and not the government needs a very accurate and legislatively disciplined anti-terrorism law that is protects the Jordanian citizen from terrorism and protect his civil and political rights all at the same time. It is not an easy process but it can be done with openness and responsible national dialogue among the various sectors in Jordan."

RUBINSTEIN